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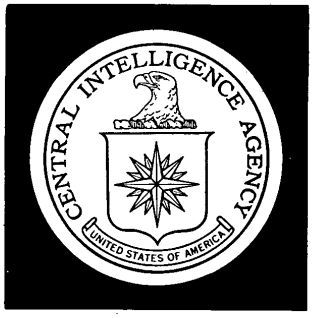

The President's Daily Brief

10 June 1970

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

10 June 1970

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

Events in Cambodia are discussed on *Page 1*.

[redacted] 50X1
[redacted] Cambodia [redacted] 50X1
[redacted] Bangkok [redacted] *(Page 2)* 50X1

On *Page 3* we discuss the implications of the loss of the Laotian town of Saravane.

The Communists may be preparing new offensive operations in South Vietnam's northernmost province. *(Page 4)*

Fighting continues in Jordan as the government and the fedayeen attempt to negotiate their differences. *(Page 5)*

Italy's center-left coalition has been strengthened by the recent regional elections. *(Page 6)*

The military junta that assumed power in Argentina on Monday is settling in. *(Page 7)*

The USSR may be planning to keep Soyuz-9 in orbit for about ten more days. *(Page 8)*

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Cambodia: Current Situation

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CAMBODIA

Although government forces have secured the airfield at Siem Reap, enemy fire is preventing resupply aircraft from landing. A Cambodian message indicates that there has been a buildup of Communist forces in the area, and refers to possible fresh attacks. At Kompong Thom city, the situation is not as improved as Cambodian Government spokesmen would have it. Yesterday the regional commander reported that the city's defenders were demoralized. He asked for two more battalions to help relieve enemy pressure.

> *Communist documents captured by government forces indicate that elements of the Viet Cong 5th Division are involved in the attacks on Kompong Thom. These troops are presumably from the 275th Regiment, whose headquarters is located some 57 miles east of the city.*

The government also is concerned about the movement of Communist forces south of Kompong Thom into the Tonle Sap region. Government forces have begun a sweep operation south of the lake, and other units have been alerted for action. Troops have been instructed to disperse the houseboats of the many Vietnamese residents on the lake.

In the southern border regions, there is also increasing Communist activity. Enemy forces resumed harassing attacks against the capital of Prey Veng Province on 8 June.

> *The presence of sizable concentrations of Communist troops in the northern part of the province, probably including elements of the Viet Cong 9th Division, indicates a major attack against Prey Veng town or Kompong Cham town, or both, may be launched soon.*

Several large enemy concentrations have been identified in Svay Rieng Province. A Cambodian intercept reports the Communists are recruiting and arming villagers along the border and may soon attack the provincial capital. According to another report, Communist forces reinfiltrated the university buildings in Kampot and Takeo towns after allied and Khmer Krom forces withdrew. They have also reoccupied nearby villages.

Communist forces again harassed the town of Labansiek in Ratanakiri Province on the night of 6-7 June. Intercepts also show that elements of the North Vietnamese B3 Front headquarters continue to move deeper into Ratanakiri.

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THAILAND-CAMBODIA

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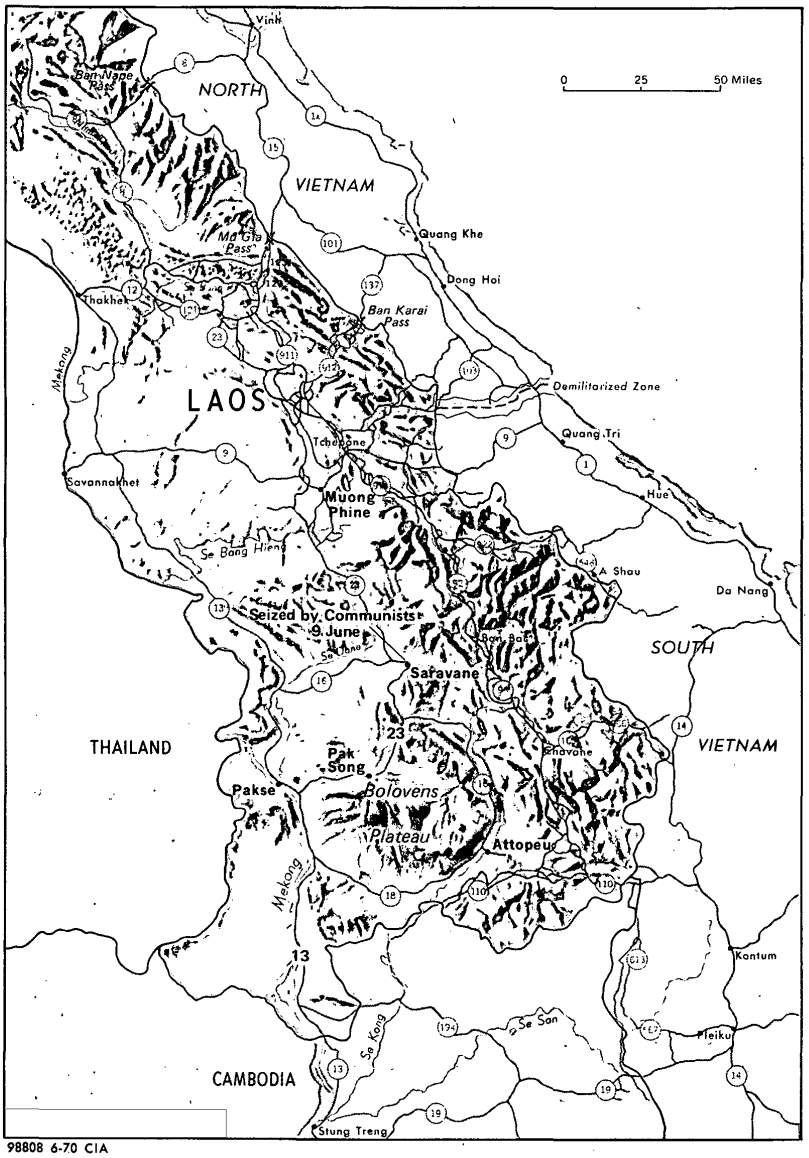
LAOS: Current Situation



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LAOS

The loss of Saravane is of relatively limited military importance. The town has been isolated, except by air, since November 1968, and nearly all of the populace had been evacuated prior to the attack. Possession of Saravane is more convenient than critical to the Communists, as they already had effective control of the road network between Muong Phine and Attopeu.

Some Laotian leaders believe the fall of Saravane may presage a new wave of attacks, with the Communists attempting to extend their control of Route 23 through Pak Song and Pakse in order to open the Route 13 supply line to Cambodia. Such a campaign would seem unnecessary, however. The Communists already have adequate logistic routes to the south, and Pak Song and Pakse are centers for the illicit supply operations run by prominent southern military and political leaders that provide enemy units with rice and other supplies.

There could, however, be important political repercussions in Vientiane from the fall of Saravane. The town was in government hands when the Geneva Accords were signed in 1962, and its capture may be interpreted by Souvanna's rightist critics as demonstrating the futility of maintaining Laotian neutrality. Souvanna has been under increasing pressure, especially since the fall of Attopeu in late April, to fill cabinet positions reserved for the Communists with rightist politicians. Some conservative political leaders, apparently abetted by the South Vietnamese ambassador, have been discussing the possibility of Laos joining an anti-Communist alliance with other Southeast Asian governments.

The fall of Saravane will also give impetus to attempts by southern politicians and some military leaders to push a resolution through the assembly calling for a declaration of national emergency. The rightists may also make a greater effort now to compose their bitter rivalries, but those are of long standing and will not be easy to resolve. The rightist pressure on Souvanna, for example, has been as much to further individual factional interests as to change policies.

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New Communist Command Authority

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SOUTH VIETNAM

There are signs that new Communist offensive operations may be in prospect in the northernmost province of Quang Tri. The most telling indicator is the establishment of a new command and control authority--called Group 300--in southern Quang Tri. Its communications have greatly expanded in recent weeks. The group now is in contact with many senior headquarters, including the high command in Hanoi. It also seems to exercise tactical command over one regiment each from the North Vietnamese 304th and 324B divisions. Both regiments are currently in southern Quang Tri Province.

There are further tenuous indications that the 304th's other two regiments may be moving southward to join the regiment already in South Vietnam. (See The President's Daily Brief of 4 June.) The two other regiments of the 324B Division are deployed to the south of Group 300, in northern Thua Thien Province. These too could be brought under the group's authority.

> *It is too early to be certain, but it seems likely that Group 300 is to be a senior tactical command for North Vietnamese combat units in southern Quang Tri Province. Its communications resemble in many respects those of the Khe Sanh Area Front, which was directly subordinate to Hanoi and controlled Communist forces during the fighting around Khe Sanh in late 1967 and early 1968. Like the Khe Sanh Area Front, the new group might turn out to be a temporary command set up to carry out a specific task or campaign.*

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JORDAN

Heavy fighting between government forces and fedayeen groups in Amman and other cities continued yesterday, despite reports during the morning of a cease-fire agreement. Reports suggest that the fighting diminished last night but resumed in some sections of Amman this morning. [redacted] 50X1

[redacted] 50X1

The fedayeen are beginning to show signs of eagerness to end the fighting. In Cairo, a spokesman for the Central Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) stated yesterday evening that all Arab governments have been asked to intervene to end the fighting. He also set out several demands for the ending of hostilities, including the formation of joint fedayeen-army patrols to control the situation and the return of Jordanian troops from the towns to their positions on the Israeli border. The spokesman added that Fatah leader Yasir Arafat returned to Amman early Tuesday and held a series of meetings with PLO central committee members, Jordanian officials, and the Jordanian Army staff command, in an attempt to prevent further deterioration of the situation.

Government handling of the crisis may be complicated by yesterday's seizure of 32 foreigners, including 14 Americans, by the Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, one of the more radical fedayeen groups. These persons apparently are being held as hostages against the possibility that the Jordanian Army might attack refugee camps; Jordan's foreign minister is negotiating with the fedayeen in an effort to secure their release.

If yesterday's failure to arrange a cease-fire was the result of a decision on King Husayn's part to clamp down on the fedayeen, the fighting can be expected to grow worse rather than taper off. [redacted] *the holding of the 32 hostages may influence the King's plans* [redacted] 50X6 50X6 50X6

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ITALY

The returns from Italy's first elections for regional councils show that the position of the center-left coalition has improved since the national elections in 1968. The four coalition parties won 58.2 percent of the regional vote on 7 and 8 June, a considerable improvement by Italian election standards over the 55.4 percent of 1968.

The newfound strength of the center-left should help the government avoid a crisis in the near future. Now that the government is on stronger legs, however, one of Prime Minister Rumor's rivals within the Christian Democratic party may attempt to replace him in the government leadership.

We still believe that the three regions in the middle of the country--Emilia-Romagna, Tuscany, and Umbria--are likely to have Communist-dominated governments. The Communists and their Proletarian Socialist allies won an absolute majority in the first and with Socialist support would have a majority in the other two.

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ARGENTINA

Amid general public apathy, the three-man military junta that ousted President Ongania on Monday is settling in. A new head of government is to be named by the middle of next week. Speculation centers on army commander General Alejandro Lanusse, spokesman for the junta. Several retired military officers and civilians also seem to be in the running.

Although the junta has made a vague commitment to start Argentina on the road to representative government over the next several years, there is still no word on what means the military will employ to meet this goal. There is unlikely to be any early move for elections: the country is unprepared for them, and there is no popular demand.

US Embassy sources believe that the junta will loosen controls on individual freedoms in the near future.

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Opposition political groups, as well as volatile elements in the Peronist-dominated labor movement, apparently are biding their time to see what is coming from the junta in the way of reform.

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NOTE

USSR: Soyuz-9 may remain in orbit for a record-breaking 18 days. [redacted] 50X1

[redacted] 50X1

Soyuz-9 has already broken the five-day Soviet record for manned space flight; if its descent coincides with the Komarov's departure, it will surpass the 14-day US record set by Gemini-7 in 1965. The spacecraft has performed well so far.

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